



Being physically relaxed at times of panic takes practice and preparation. The goal is to be as relaxed as possible to prevent panic taking over you. It is not to take a 'time out' as a relaxation period, although that in itself may not be a bad thing.

Nevertheless, learning to relax at times of panic can involve a learning process, starting by practicing under easy conditions and taking time to do so, and then practicing relaxation under progressively more difficult circumstances.

Below are some guided techniques that will help you relax.

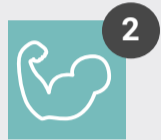


Guided relaxation

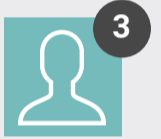
The first stage of learning relaxation (and using relaxation as a 'time out') involves a series of exercises that tense and then relax specific muscle groups, systematically moving through the body. Ideally, hold each exercise for about 5 seconds and repeat two to three times for each muscle group. You can find an audio version of the below exercises at https://projects.swan.ac.uk/thrombosis-psych/?page_id=110



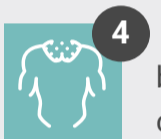
1 hands and forearms (making a fist)



2 upper arms (touching fingers to shoulder)



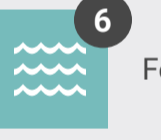
3 shoulder and lower neck (pulling up shoulders)



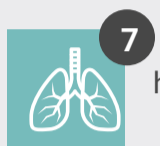
4 back of neck (touching chin to chest)



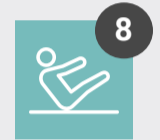
5 lips (pushing them together)



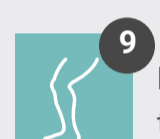
6 Forehead (frowning)



7 holding a deep breath



8 abdomen (tensing stomach muscles)



9 legs and feet (push heel away, pull toes to point at head: don't lift leg)

You do not need a lot of tension. The most important thing is to focus on relaxing each muscle group following the tension - and not to rush the exercises.

Don't stretch or push yourself too far, but while you practice the relaxation, keep yourself aware how you feel, what the difference is between tension and relaxation, so you can begin to recognise these differences in your day to day life.

Getting into the right frame of mind to relax



Lie on a bed or large comfortable chair which supports your head and neck



Find a time when you are not disturbed; relaxation can take up to 20 mins in the beginning



Accept that your mind will wander, you may lose track or begin to daydream. This happens to everyone. Try to focus back on the relaxation process. Don't get annoyed or impatient. This will stop you relaxing



If you fall asleep before the end, don't worry! Ideally though you would practice relaxation at a time of day when you are more alert.

Moving on

After you are confident you can relax using the guided relaxation, you can begin to incorporate relaxation into your day to day life. It's worth getting into the habit of being as relaxed as possible during the day.

This makes it less likely you will shift into feelings of panic and gives you lots of practice in relaxing to order.

Try to establish a habit of monitoring your level of muscular tension through the body at regular intervals (say, every hour or so or when you have a potentially challenging event): as you learn to relax, you may be surprised how much more aware of your tension you are.

The key here is to relax discretely and for relaxation to be a well-practiced skill that is not evident to anyone except yourself; and can be used at any time of night or day.

